

Greg Doyon – Great Falls City Manager
HB 579 Testimony
April 10, 2013

Good morning, Chairman Sonju and Senators.

My name is Greg Doyon; I am the City Manager of Great Falls and the City's appointed member to Montana Defense Alliance.

I am here today to testify against HB 579 on behalf of the Mayor and the City Commissioners.

It's unusual and uncharacteristic for the City of Great Falls to testify in opposition of a bill that on its face would appear to be helpful to the city and Montana's military community. As the Committee is well aware, Great Falls and Cascade County are hosts to the state's two largest military installations. Suffice to say, Great Falls is dependent on its military. We have the most to gain and the most to lose in this equation.

You've heard a little about the Alliance. I've observed other military advocacy/task groups in action at conferences and even back in D.C. on the Hill. Most have a state presence. We believe that state of Montana needs to be active in its military advocacy beyond Helena and we welcome that. The Alliance has demonstrated its willingness to work with other counties, state legislators, the Governor's Office and the federal delegation.

If there is one thing we have learned, it's that partnership is the key factor in leading effective military advocacy, planning, and lobbying. So is speaking with one voice.

Mixed messages from a state or from various groups wreak havoc. Nothing will stop effective communications with local military base leadership, state leadership (including the military), the Department of Defense, or the federal delegation faster than groups sending different messages. Unfortunately, I've seen this before – I've seen the consequences. It creates confusion, destroys trust, and ruins the credibility of organizations.

HB 579 includes a provision that the Task Force will "work with other local and state military advocacy organizations". If this were sincere, the Alliance would have been a key partner in formulation of the Task Force. The sponsor would have recognized that the stakeholders (previously described) felt so strongly about mission advocacy and a desire to have a unified community message that they appointed representatives to the Alliance – an organization that represents those organizations and their large constituencies.

I wanted to very quickly talk about the importance of keeping the City at the forefront of any statewide military initiative.

The City currently provides water and sewer to MAFB. The Air Force, in an effort to curb its operational costs continues to seek ways of partnering with communities to provide services. On a recent trip to D.C. we were able to visit again with Kathleen Ferguson, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment and Logistics. With her assistance, we're working toward an exercise that would help explore providing services beyond the gate.

Why is this important? This model, often referred to as the "Monterey Model" is consistent with the Air Force's "base of the future" and utilizes a Public-Public/Public-Private (P4) model. In order to make this a reality, the initiative must include the City because it's the only entity has the capacity to provide those services.

The City was part of a larger initiative by Cascade County and participated with a Joint Land Use Study for MAFB. The purpose of the JLUS is to prevent encroachment of military installations and therefore, not create a reason to be further scrutinized under a BRAC round.

Recommendations from the completed JLUS will become part of the City's revised Growth Management Plan. This study demonstrates to the Department of Defense that missile counties, Cascade County, and Great Falls are proactive about protecting its installations.

We're also active in the Association of Defense Communities. ADC is the premier organization for communities that host military installations. It is a tremendous resource to the community and helps the Alliance keep abreast of developments in all branches of the military. ADC conferences also provide opportunities to visit with key military leadership. Trip reports from these conferences are available online at the Great Falls Chamber website.

Some in this room will wonder why we are opposing the bill at this time. The Great Falls Chamber provided testimony during the initial House hearing on the bill. Three of us were in D.C. meeting with our Congressional delegation and Pentagon officials doing exactly what this legislation seeks to achieve – otherwise we would have participated. The MTDA supported the concept of more statewide involvement but had concerns and felt that it should, at the very least, have had a seat at the table. That was flatly rejected.

Even the best policy ideas have unintended consequences. Conceptually, the legislation makes sense, but I fear in practice, it creates some serious coordination problems that are more detrimental to us. The City is very concerned that there will be disagreement between the two groups, jeopardizing the work of the Alliance. During this critical time period with the military a disjointed effort will be disastrous for Great Falls, Cascade County, and the State.